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Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his colleagues being garlanded during the BJP's victory celebrations, at the party office in New Delhi on Thursday | PTI

GUJARAT LANDSLIDE, HIMACHAL STUNNER

Gujarat BJP equals Left Front's Bengal record of seven consecutive terms • Cong wrests HP • AAP qualifies for national party status

SHAHID FARIDI @ New Delhi

BRAND Modi registered a historic victory in the Gujarat elections where it shattered all previous records and confined the opposition Congress to its worst ever tally, which is insufficient to even claim the post of leader of opposition in the state Assembly. To get the post, the Congress needs a minimum of 19 seats in the 182-member House, but has only 17.

The other state that went to polls — Himachal Pradesh — saw the Congress wresting power from the BJP. The grand old party won 40 seats against the BJP's 25. Unpopularity of Chief Minister Jairam Thakur and the Congress party's election promises of restoring the old pension scheme, free 300 units of power and ₹1,500 allowance to women saw the state continuing the decades old tradition of not re-electing a sitting government.

The BJP under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who addressed 31 rallies in Gujarat, won 156 seats and is set to form a government for the seventh consecutive term, equaling the Left Front record in West Bengal. The party also surpassed its previous best performance of winning 127 seats in the state in 2002, and bettered Madhavsinh Solanki's all-time record of winning 149 seats for the Congress in 1985.

Such was the popularity of the BJP in this election that it swept the tribal and minority seats, which were considered Congress strongholds before this election. The Congress citadel of Saurashtra, which helped bring the party within striking distance of power in the 2017 election, also came crumbling down under the BJP's onslaught.

As celebrations broke out, the party's Gujarat president C R Patil announced that Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel will take his oath of office on December 12. The ceremony will be attended by the prime minister, home minister Amit Shah and national president J P Nadda, besides a number of Union ministers and chief ministers.

Addressing party workers at the BJP's Delhi headquarters, Modi termed the Gujarat victory as the beginning of the golden period for new India. He said the BJP will deliver a developed India to the youth of the country by 2047. Nadda attributed the landslide to the prime minister's credibility and people's trust in his leadership. Amit Shah termed the victory as a rejection of those who do politics of hollow promises, freebies and appeasement. He said it shows the "unwavering faith of the public in Narendra Modi's development model".

As for the AAP, it garnered nearly 13% votes in Gujarat, bringing down the Congress share from 40% in the last election to 27%. The AAP's vote share catapulted it to the status of a national party.

In Himachal, the Congress frontrunner for the post of chief minister, Kaul Singh Thakur, lost the election just like BJP's Prem Kumar Dhumal did while his party won the last election. Another senior Congress leader, Asha Kumari, who was also in the running for CM-ship, lost. The top contenders for the post now are state party president Pratibha Singh, senior MLA Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu, state working president Rajendra Rana, who had defeated Dhumal in the last election, former state president Kuldip Rathore, and leader of opposition in the outgoing House Mukesh Agnihotri. P9,10

BJP is people's first choice for growth: Modi

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

ELATED at the landslide victory of the BJP in his home state Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday pitched for making India a developed nation by 2047.

Speaking to party workers at the BJP headquarters here on Thursday, Modi said the Gujarat election results have proved that the common man aspires to see India as a developed nation. "Put India first, demolish the faultiness and make the country a developed nation by 2024," Modi said, adding that youngsters have rejected divisive politics and voted for the BJP. "Whenever people want their aspirations fulfilled, the BJP comes as their first choice," he said, adding, "There is a clear message from the Gujarat result that only the politics of development will continue for the next 25 years, nothing else."

As for the Himachal Pradesh results, where the saffron party lost to the Congress, Modi said the Central government will continue to support the hill state as the BJP wants development in the state even as it will act as a constructive opposition party.

Will fix flaws and work hard, say Rahul, Kharge

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

AFTER its crushing defeat in the Gujarat Assembly elections, the Congress on Thursday said that it has accepted the mandate and "will rectify its shortcomings". Though the grand old party suffered a humiliating defeat in Gujarat, its win in Himachal Pradesh came as a huge relief.

On the Gujarat debacle, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said, "Victory and defeat happen in a democracy and it is not permanent. We'll continue to fight our battle. It is our ideological fight. It's a long journey and we'll rectify our shortcomings."

On the Himachal win, Kharge said the Bharat Jodo Yatra has contributed to its victory. He also credited Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Sonia Gandhi for the victory in the hill state.

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, who is leading the Bharat Jodo Yatra, said the party will continue to fight for the ideals of the country as well as the rights of the people of the state.

"We humbly accept the mandate of the people of Gujarat. We will reorganise and work hard," he said.

Gujarat is considered a BJP stronghold. This time, we breached the fortress. Next time, we will win it

Arvind Kejriwal, AAP convenor and [redacted]

This result will have a positive effect on the Karnataka polls. It will be a morale booster for the BJP cadre. Our victory is guaranteed if we work with more vigour

Basavaraj Bommai, Chief Minister

There is no surprise that BJP is coming to power in Gujarat because the AAP contested the election and ate away our votes in all the seats

Siddaramaiah, Congress leader

Safety of buses: MSRTC thanks Belagavi cops

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Belagavi

AMID the ongoing border dispute between Karnataka and Maharashtra, the Belagavi police ensured safe passage of 145 buses of Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) and hundreds of passenger vehicles from Saundatti Yallammana Gudda pilgrim centre in Belagavi to Maharashtra. MSRTC officials have thanked the Belagavi police for giving them protection. Over 50,000 people from Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa and Andhra Pradesh visited the temple during a fair organised at Shri Renuka Devi temple of Yallammana Gudda in Saundatti taluk on 'Hostila Hunnime'.

SP Sanjeev Patil said rumours were being spread on social media that Maharashtra vehicles passing through Saundatti were being attacked.

The assistant superintendent of MSRTC, Atul More, thanked Belagavi police for ensuring safe movement of buses carrying pilgrims. He said the devotees were able to pay obeisance to Goddess Renuka Devi without any difficulty and no untoward incident took place in Saundatti.

Cabinet nod to K'taka Youth Policy, stress on skill training

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE state cabinet on Thursday approved Karnataka Youth Policy which will focus on empowering youth in all sectors. The policy will stress on providing skill training to youth to address rising unemployment and also tackle problems of malnutrition, mental health and addiction among youth.

According to Youth and Sports Minister KC Narayana Gowda, for the first time such a comprehensive policy has been framed. "The policy will stress on issues youth are facing. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai will also present a Youth Budget in 2023," he said, adding that the policy also recommends a separate Directorate for Youth, with offices at taluk level," he said.

In October 2021, the state government had constituted a 13-member expert committee to frame the Karnataka Youth Policy. P5

500 SCHEMES FOR 2.11 CRORE YOUTH IN STATE

According to data shared by the department, in Karnataka, presently, of the 7.5 crore population, 30 per cent or 2.11 crore are youth. Sources from the department said there are over 500 schemes for youth in various departments.

EXPRESS READ

Bengaluru to soon have 8 city centres, says CM

Bengaluru: CM Bommai has announced that Bengaluru will soon have eight city centres in all eight directions. The city centres to come up will involve in developing the metropolis in a well-planned model. P2

EXPRESS INTAKE

Woman's body found in sack on crowded train | P3

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